

**AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1.(original) A method of enhancing audibility of a far-end signal from a far-end user to a near-end user in a telephone system, including the steps of

determining a gain as a function varying in both in an estimated near-end background noise signal level and an estimated near-end speech signal level; and applying said gain to said far-end speech signal.

2.(original) The method of claim 1, including the steps of determining a first threshold from an estimated maximum far-end speech signal level;

limiting said gain to values below said first threshold.

3.(original) The method of claim 1, including the steps of determining a second threshold from at least one estimated echo return loss; limiting said gain to values below said second threshold.

4.(original) The method of claim 1, including the steps of determining a first threshold from an estimated maximum far-end speech signal level;

determining a second threshold from at least one estimated echo return loss; limiting said gain to values below the smallest of said first and second thresholds.

5.(currently amended) The method of ~~any of claims 1-5~~claim 1, including the step of low pass filtering said determined gain before application to said far-end speech signal.

6.(original) An apparatus for enhancing audibility of a far-end speech signal from a far-end user to a near-end user in a telephone system, including  
gain control logic for determining a gain as a function varying in both an estimated near-end background noise signal level and an estimated near-end speech signal level;  
and  
an amplifier for applying said gain to said far-end speech signal.

7.(original) The apparatus of claim 6, including  
means for determining a first threshold from an estimated maximum far-end speech signal level,  
means for limiting said gain to values below said first threshold.

8.(original) The apparatus of claim 6, including  
means for determining a second threshold from at least one estimated echo return loss;  
means for limiting said gain to values below said second threshold.

9.(original) The apparatus of claim 6, including  
means for determining a first threshold from an estimated maximum far-end speech signal level;  
means for determining a second threshold from at least one estimated echo return loss;  
means for limiting said gain to values below the smallest of said first and second thresholds.

10.(currently amended) The apparatus of ~~any of claims 6-9~~claim 6, including a low pass filter for filtering said determined gain before application to said far-end speech signal.